

Common Folk Oral History Collection  
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and

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**Location of Interview:** Mag xiang, Panam County, Tibet Autonomous Region, China

**Date of Interview:** August 2, 2000

**Language of Interview:** Tibetan

**Interviewed by:** Melvyn Goldstein, Ben Jiao and Gyatso

**Name:** Khenrab [Tib. mkhyen rab]

**Gender:** Male

**Age:** 60

**Date of Birth:** 1940

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## Abstract

Khenrab was the illegitimate son of a trenyog in Panam County (in Tsang) who became a monk and then a communist activist/official. In this interview, Khenrab continues to describe the Mutual Aid Team system and how he and his wife experienced difficulties during the campaigns of re-investigation because they were classified as gertshab. He also discusses the Cultural Revolution and joining the Nyamdre with all the people in the village. He continues by talking about the fighting in other counties, and describes the struggle sessions that were mainly held by the activists and the Red Guards. Additionally, he discusses the destruction of the Sogang Monastery and how his gertshab classification was removed.

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## Transcript of Tape 2

**A:** Because we didn't get a large share of land, it took only one day to plow our fields. However, we didn't have any plowing animals because the ones we got during (the Democratic reforms) we sold. But unlike us, the middle class farmers [Tib. 'bring pa] had several animals for plowing, and since we were grouped together with middle class households into Mutual Aid Teams, we could share their animals. In those teams, all the farm work, like transporting manure, irrigation, etc., was done together.

Under that system, mostly we had to work for the middle class farmers as we didn't have to do much on our own fields. We had to work for them and they called upon us any time. In this system, all the times we worked would be listed in terms of work points. In turn, they would provide their donkeys (four to five) in case we had to transport manure to our own fields. Normally such tasks would be performed in one day. The middle class farmers had land in amounts like thirty or forty khe. In our village, there were about two households who even had roughly sixty khe. So there was endless work to be performed. Most of the spring and autumn would be consumed working for them. They would feed us when we worked for them. All the days we provided work for them would be listed as would the number of donkeys they provided to us for our own work. Then after all the farm work was done, a tsugdrang in each Mutual Aid Team would calculate the number of days each poor household worked for the middle class farmers and the numbers of animals they supplied for our work. With this, any extra work points we had [after subtracting the work points for the use of animals] we, the poor households, were supposed to be paid in grain. However, normally there wouldn't be much left for us to get as the cost of their donkeys was very high. In this way, it was more like we provided service to the middle class farmers rather than a real Mutual Aid Team.

**Q:** At the time, did you feel that the Mutual Aid Team was beneficial or not?

**A:** Since there wasn't any notion of different things that we could do, there wasn't any other choice than following what the government made us to do. Despite this, there was still quite a strong sense of competition between the Work Teams in terms of the work and amount of cattle each team had.

**Q:** What was done about the yield? Would the middle farmers own their yield and you yours?

**A:** Everyone owned their own yield. And for them [the middle class farmers] they would own the excess yield after paying our salary [based on the work points]. But they had to deliver the "Donation Grain" and the "Selling Grain" to the government, so after paying this there was not much left for them. If they couldn't provide the required amount, they had to sell from their own share of grain, [that is] from the grain they needed for their family. It was quite bad even though they were paid for it [the grain they had to sell to the government]. We also had to help the middle farmers clean their grain. They had to deliver a large amount of Donation and Selling Grain.

**Q:** Were you the head of your household after you returned?

**A:** Yes, I was.

**Q:** Were there struggle sessions during the era of the Mutual Aid Teams?

**A:** No, there weren't many struggle sessions held, but there were fierce struggle sessions held here at the time of the Democratic Reforms.

**Q:** Was there any need to provide government Donation Grain and other taxes from the yield of the poor households?

**A:** Yes. Even the poor households had to pay Donation Grain according to a percentage, but the system was not accurate as yields in every field were uneven. Also in the case of middle class households, some had large lands while others didn't. The percentage for government Donation Grain would be calculated according to the amount of seed set for one's own land. Using this system, many households were left with not enough grain for their own food [because the tax was a percent of seed sown not actual yields].

**Q:** As you were in your twenties, did you have thoughts of marriage at the time?

**A:** I was actually married before that, at the age of nineteen. The woman I met was a nun from Gyangön [Tib. rgyang dgon] Nunnery. At that time, there was an order for all the monks and nuns from the Dūjung chu to come together for a political study session here in Sogang. That gathering actually ended up more like a match-making affair for marriage than a political study session.

Because all the monks and nuns had gathered from different places without there being any future to being a nun or monk anymore, we were encouraged to find partners whom we found interesting. Actually, I was at home then. I was not afraid of the study session per se as I had experience these before. In that session, I and my future wife met each other. At that time nothing happened between us, but later her family asked for me to move to their home as a move-in magpa, since my sister was already living with my mother.

**Q:** What did you think about that? Did you see her at the session?

**A:** Yes. I felt that I would not be a monk in the future and it was just a matter of time before I would look for a wife, so why not.

**Q:** So what happened when you had to go to their home as a marry-in magpa?

**A:** So as was arranged, I moved into their home as the magpa.

**Q:** How old were you then?

**A:** I was about twenty.

**Q:** What year was that?

**A:** That was probably in 1960. After arriving there, I found out I didn't like being there because my wife's family's class status was that of nomad lord [Tib. 'brog bdag]. At that time they hadn't been persecuted and their property had not been confiscated because their family was considered to be progressive [Tib. yar thon pa]. Basically, the properties of the ngadag and the ngatsab were confiscated, but one of the older family members, my wife's grandfather, had been admitted into the Political Consultative Conference [Tib. chab srid gros tshogs]. He was getting eighty yuan in salary from the state.

Because there was a gap between my status and theirs, and since they had many people, we couldn't live together and it was proposed that a house be built separately for me and my wife to stay in. I didn't answer anything at the time and replied that first I wanted to go home before settling anything. Then I didn't return back there and my wife had to be sent to me here in our village. We were living in a house which my grandmother had before the Democratic Reforms. That house was very small and later we moved into a new house in Sogang that was allocated to us by the government.

**Q:** What was your wife's reaction, suddenly finding herself in such poor living conditions in your house, because she had lived in good houses as she was from a "nomad lord" family?

**A:** There wasn't any special reaction. Of course, in reality she would have felt our home was very poor as there weren't any valuable things in our small room. It was just a single room. My mother had a bed in one corner and my wife and I had to stay in another corner. But we got a lot of aid from my wife's family. In terms of economic conditions, their family wasn't that rich, but they had so many animals that they had to hire workers which later made them fall under the class of nomad lord.

Later, there was a movement called the re-investigation campaign [Tib. skyar zhib] in which they re-investigated and re-classified the class rankings of people. At this time, my wife was categorized as gertshab, a representative of the nomad lord, because her family was a "nomad lord." In such families, the children aged eighteen or twenty were categorized as the phutru while the offspring over that age would be classified as gertshab. So although my family was poor, I was classified as a gertshab because my wife was in that category.

Later, we had to move out from the house allocated to us [during the Democratic Reforms] and some other family was put there instead of us. Our home was put into the hands of a poor household as it was said that trenyog were to move out. During the re-investigation movement, an education session was held at which I was categorized as a poor household because my mother was a trenyog, but my wife was categorized as gertshab. The gertshab didn't have any political rights.

**Q:** What did not having political rights mean?

**A:** It meant one didn't have the right to speak or the right to participate in education sessions and other meetings. For those with that status, if one didn't commit any crime one wasn't bothered, but in case one committed a crime, then the crime would be worse than the crime committed by one of the laboring masses and the punishment would be heavier.

Then later, when an another re-investigation of class rank was launched, my wife's family was labeled as a "reactionary household" [Tib. log spyod pa].

**Q:** Why?

**A:** Who knows! They were persecuted severely and all of their property both here in the village and in the nomadic area was confiscated. From their very large property, even small articles in the kitchen weren't left. All were taken away despite the grandfather in their family being an activist who had attended TAR political meetings just two or three years before.

During that meeting, it was determined that apart from one other nomad family in northern Tibet, they were the biggest nomad family. When the confiscation was done during the re-investigation movement, their family property was 2,200 sheep, 700 goats and 700 yaks. Despite being such a large family, they didn't have anyone who could read and write, or who had the ability to speak eloquently. All the family members were like morons [Tib. lkugs pa]. They didn't know how to cook good dishes and they didn't have good clothes to wear, although their houses were filled with skins and wool. When that happened, our situation became worse and we were looked at with a bad opinion and the way people treated us changed for the worse.

Additionally, my father — who was from the Samling family — paid me a visit once. He came to meet me with bringing some clothes, shoes and things from the county some time before his mother died. Formerly, his mother showed more interest in caring for me and she was the one who assisted me by sending me to the monastery. But it seemed that through the influence of political education sessions, his mind changed and he came to accept me as his son. Although my family was poor, later I felt unhappy because I was treated badly because I had a gertshab wife and because I became the offspring of a ngadag. Because of this, other people said my history or class background was not pure. At that time, I didn't have much freedom to speak.

In this way, under difficult conditions, the system of Mutual Aid Teams passed by. Following that, the People's Commune [Ch. kung she], or the rukhag, was set up in our village. There were two rukhag, and my household came under the 2nd rukhag. They divided the middle farmers who had bigger lands and they attached the poor to them. The first rukhag had more people. All the land and cattle of the middle farmers were also confiscated, which was the second reform, and they only left the things in their houses. In the past, at the previous time, they had been confiscated from ngadag, but now all the land and cattle were confiscated.

**Q:** What year was it that this was launched?

**A:** I think it was about 1962 or '63 when it was launched.

**Q:** How old were you?

**A:** I was in my twenties then.

**Q:** Did you have any kids then?

**A:** I think I had a kid at the time. For several years, we didn't have any kids. One kid that we had before had died. I had a child born in 1960. With the formation of the rukhag, in our second rukhag, people were selected to take care of the dzo and dzomo and their animal fodder. There would be, likewise, people who had to herd the dzo and dzomo and to look after the donkeys. Hence, my wife was appointed to milk the dzomo as there was no one who wanted to accept that job [because it was hard]. But we couldn't refuse the job as we had no such right. She was told that because she had experience in nomadic work she had to perform the job.

**Q:** So was it that she was given a job that others did not want to do?

**A:** Yes, she was. She had to milk, collect the dzomo's dung and dry them by herself. And she had to distribute the milk, although there was another person who took charge of feeding the dzomo. At that time she was in charge of ten to eleven dzomo. She had to get up very early and leave home to milk the dzomo before dawn. She could only return after sunrise when all her tasks of milking and collecting dung were done. Only after this could she take care of preparing food for her kids and doing household work. Even for me, though I wasn't considered a trerim, because I had a gertshab wife and because they were saying my person history was not clean, there wasn't much leisure time for me to stay home. I was told to do all the jobs that were refused by others when the leaders in the brigade assigned them.

At that time, the easier work and the work that was done near the village were welcomed by all the people. Hence the heavier tasks and the ones refused by others were assigned to people like us. The other people were saying things like their boots were worn out and they didn't have food to take when they were assigned to go to work at some distance, so they would say that they would do the work that would be done nearer to the village. There was a lot of biased treatment at the time. Many young men were asked to work plowing with yaks, but the job was refused by some people who said they didn't know how to plough. Actually, every person had to learn the work. But the work was assigned to me. So I was supplied with a pair of yaks and made to do the job. Actually, I was able to do the work quite well. But then I was asked to take up the job of "irrigation manager" [Tib. chu dpon]. This was the person who was in charge of irrigation at the two water sources we had in the village. That job was really very strenuous. I had to get up early at dawn and go to bed late most of the time. From very early in the morning, I had to go to start the irrigation in the fields. There were other people who would only handle irrigation inside the borders of the fields. Despite that, I got only the same work points. They would leave after the watering of the fields was done and I was the only person to channel the

water or to divert water so it did not destroy paths in the fields, etc. With this job I also had to make the water canals point in the right direction for the next day's irrigation. I did the work of irrigation manager for about three years. It affected my household badly as we, unlike other households with more laborers, had only two adults. So it proved a very difficult time for me as both of us were assigned jobs that had to be performed all the time. If we tried to ask for permission to resign from the jobs, we would be told that it was a revolutionary assignment to perform the jobs as told.

**Q:** What was your feeling about the sudden change in the way people treated you as you were said to have unclean personal history and your wife was gertshab?

**A:** With that sudden change it seemed that we were different from the common people and it was quite a heavy burden over and above the physical hardship we were going through already. I felt very sad that the leaders treated just the two of us with such unfair treatment so we had to work so hard. And I wondered what they really meant by talking about the rightful policy of the Communist Party at the time. We were in a very sad position then, as we were not allowed to resign from our jobs because they said it was our revolutionary duty. When other people were declining to work, they were not saying that to them. So when such things happened, I felt sad that we were getting such biased treatment from the leaders. And we could do nothing against such treatment.

Then as time went on like this, we had our kid. But for that poor kid, we had hardly any time to look after him. He was put in bed and locked inside our house all the time. He couldn't walk even after three years of age. But now we have a daughter and a younger son who is in school. They were born after the gentsang started [around 1980], so there is a vast different in the physical development of the later two children compared with that of the previous one. The later two children were taller and healthier than the previous kid who, after the gentsang, became a monk. We had actually one child before him, but he died. That poor kid didn't have a very happy childhood as he had to do lots of work.

The kid himself was able to understand that his misbehaving would cause problems for us parents, so he was saying, "If I behave naughtily, my parents will be scolded at the meetings, right?" Apart from that, he was abused by others calling him the "child of an enemy" [Tib. dgra phrug]. And he became very timid because of such treatment. Unlike the later son, he was not at all naughty and he was very sensible. Often he was mistreated by groups of kids from other families. Moreover, I was out most of the time [working] and every burden of raising him and all the others at home was left for my wife. Through such (difficult) times we were able to bring up the child.

In spite of all these difficulties, luckily we used to earn a good amount of work points. In my wife's case, she used to receive eight work points daily, except on holidays such as Woman's Day, though the work points were not that high for her. As for myself, I used to get the highest number of work points of all the young men. I would have something like 3,000 work points when the final totalling up of work points was done at the end of a year.

So when there was a good harvest, I would receive a good amount of work point grain when the yearly share was given. And because of that, our livelihood condition in terms of food wasn't that difficult. But of course we had to be very careful with how we used the ration grain, since there wasn't any other source of income such as relief from the government, etc. [for people in our class]. Such was life during the rukhag system. When I took up the irrigation manager's job, the only leisure time I had was the duration of time after the spring irrigation was the done and before the first irrigation for the crops that had grown began. During that [time] the irrigation manager didn't have much responsibility.

While I was still an irrigation manager, I was ordered to transport the "government Donation Grain" with donkeys to Chushul [Tib. chu shur]. As I couldn't decline the job, I had to go. That job involved traveling to Chushul and was really hard. We had three people with thirty donkeys loaded with animal fodder and twenty-four donkeys loaded with grain. There would be donkeys with one person returning back daily as the hay for the donkeys they carried ran out, so there were places like Gyantse, places further from Gyantse like Yarlung drak [Tib. yar lung sbrag], Nangkartse [Tib. snang dkar rtse] and even Paldi [Tib. dpal di] the furthest place we would return. From there, the ones among us who would drive back the donkeys would start the journey back. There would be fodder left at the places where we lodged previously when travelling from the village.

After I returned, I thought I would continue my old job of irrigation manager, but I was ordered to go to Tingkye [Tib. gting skyes, an area southwest of Shigatse] to graze animals in the summer since that place had good grass. I tried to decline that job too, for my wife was expecting a baby. But I was refused and I had to go. Of course I was inexperienced at the job, but I finally went. The other companion-workers sent were the same as me. I did this job for about four years.

While I was still going there, I was called upon to go to the big project of a state farm established east of our village. At the time, strangely, all the people who were [of a] middle-class farmer background were sent there. As I was the only poor farmer, during the time I was sent there I was the leader of the middle class farmers. Three people from each middle farmer household were made to go there. That was done over the whole chu. We had to work day and night very strenuously on the land that was divided among the groups. Due to such stressful work I dislocated my shoulder and couldn't work.

After telling this to the health worker, I was still kept there for two months. Then the number of people working there increased as all the people from poor-class households had to go there. So I was replaced by another person. That was on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth month (just before Tibetan New Year). I got home the next day and stayed home celebrating New Year on the first and second day. Then on the third day, I was told to become a herder so I had to leave home again.

There was an estate that belonged to the Sogang family in the past. That farm had been turned into an Animal Husbandry Commune. One person from each village in Mebu xiang had to work on the farm. Before that, the village in the upper valley set up a State Farm, but it seemed unprofitable so people from their villages were complaining and they demanded to be permitted to withdraw from the Animal Husbandry Commune. They wanted other rukhag to take it over. Henceforth, our village's first and

second rukhag took over the Animal Husbandry Commune and I was told to become the nomad in that collective.

At the time there was a household of trenyog background which didn't participate in the rukhag. That household declined to participate for three years. They had about thirty yaks. When the eastern project was launched they were called upon to petition to participate in the rukhag, but the household didn't petition for it would bring no benefit to them. So later, they had to be forced to participate in the rukhag. About forty cows were added to their rukhag and they wanted our rukhag number two to take over the Communal Husbandry [Ch. gong she; Tib. 'brog pa], so the second rukhag took it over.

With that, I had to work in animal husbandry. About 110 sheep and goats were handed over to our rukhag. There were also yaks. This happened during springtime. Actually, another person who used to be the xiang leader was sent with me to do this job. He was an illiterate. I didn't have a good time with him as I had to work as a herder while he was acting as my boss, staying in the corral making the assignments. When so many animals were scattered on the mountain, I couldn't control them. It was like endless work even though I was running after the animals all day long. So I could no longer carry on the work as there were too many cattle to take care of.

Hence I went back to the village and asked for permission to resign from that job. The leader inquired about my reason for that and I replied, "There were too many cattle to herd, so I can't guarantee the safety of all the cattle." But the leaders wanted me to continue my job and allowed me to choose a new partner for the job.

Then I requested they send a person by the name of Tseden [Tib. tshe brtan]. He was from middle-class background, so I thought that he would obey what he was ordered to do. So that year my old partner, the xiang head, was replaced. That year there were only three cows expecting calves when we took over the herds. But through experience and our efforts we managed to have the calves survive through the summer. Then in the very following year, we expanded the number of calves to twenty-two. We did our best as we were obliged to. Then in the third year, there were another twenty-two additional calves. Apart from all of those, quite a few had been killed by wolves. Then without finishing the third year, the rukhag farm was taken over by the government and a State Farm [Ch. nong chang] was formed. There was one State Farm in "Mag" and one in Dūjung. So the cattle were divided among the State Farm in Mag, Dūjung, and also to one in Chomö.

At that time, there was a rule applied to the rukhag called [Tib. skye med 'chi med] which meant that the same amount of cattle should be returned as when the rukhag received them initially regardless of the death and the new births. This regulation had been made between the leaders, though I didn't know of it. Thus, when all the cattle were returned finally after three years, about thirty cattle remained for us [the ones over what they had initially been given]. We chose all the younger or better animals to be left for us. Henceforth, we had more leisure time as there were still people to look after those left animals. But as time went by, due to our devotion to our task, there was again a large expansion of herd numbers. During this time there happened to be an annual meeting in both the xiang and the chu and the results of the pasture work were examined. At those meetings, I was given a prize of one sheep for good performance for the year's animal husbandry work. People from the chu came to give me the prize. Our rukhag collectively owned about eighty cattle when the gentsang was launched.

**Q:** Now, please tell us something about the Cultural Revolution.

**A:** During the Cultural Revolution, I think I was a herder going to Tingkye to graze animals. Actually, the Cultural Revolution started before that. During that time, not only me, almost all the people were affected. There were even people from among the common masses who suffered struggle sessions. It was such turmoil.

**Q:** How many groups were there?

**A:** There were two, but nobody in our village joined either of those groups. The whole of our xiang was said to be Nyamdre, but in other places both of the groups existed. In places where the two groups existed in same area, fierce fighting took place. But here in our xiang, nothing like that happened and our xiang didn't participate in the revolts in Nyemo [Tib. snye mo] and Biru [Tib. 'bri ru] headed by Nyemo Trinley Chödrön [Tib. 'phrin las chos sgron]. In that clash, Panam County didn't take part. Of course there were other counties that took part and a lot of trouble occurred then.

When we were taking a trip to Chushul, on the way we stopped at a place called Palde for a night's lodging. It was a chu. We were transporting grain to Nangkartse then. At the place where we asked for lodging, many people from different places arrived there riding horses. We had to leave the following morning, but on the return trip we again lodged there. That night we hardly had any sleep as a struggle session was being held against somebody that lasted the whole night. It seemed as if the meeting held there was for making decisions about struggling against some people. There must have been an examination of every person in the county and villages for that purpose. We could see people being beaten to death surrounded by huge numbers of People's Liberation Army troops and people from the Work Team. Such fierce struggle sessions didn't happen in Panam County. Fortunately, Panam County hadn't gone through such a campaign, although since it was the time of the Cultural Revolution, our county also had to destroy religious statues, etc. But unlike our county, Nangkartse had to take part.

**Q:** Were there Red Guards in your village during the time?

**A:** Yes there were. As everywhere else, our village had to destroy the ngadag's property and religious items and scriptures too. Then, following that, there was another movement called "Beat One and Oppose Three" [Tib. gcig rdung gsum rgo]. At the time, a person who used to be the salesman and clerk in the xiang became the Party Secretary of Dūjung chu. Later he was promoted to the County Agriculture and Husbandry Bureau [Ch. nong mu ju].

At that time, he was the xiang zhang. During that campaign all the middle-class farmers were put under strict investigation to find out to what extent each of them indulged in trading and they were made to suffer a great deal. Actually, everyone had to trade their own products for other products that they needed, for example, exchanging cooking oil, tsamba and flour for wool and meat.

Particularly, there was an old man who also had to ship government grain, but that year he was not sent as he and every other person under investigation were convicted of being capitalists. They were made to present their own confessions.

There were unending interrogations and many who had nothing to confess were compelled to make up stories to present to the xiang officials as confessions. During that time as I was away from home, I asked leaders in the chu to grant me leave to return back home. I explained that the situation in my home was very bad as my wife and I were the only members at home and my wife had to work from early morning to late at night so she needed me to be there to help her give birth to the child she was expecting. But I was refused permission to leave and I was told that the rukhag leaders were expecting a lot from me and it would be bad to disappoint them. Moreover, I was told that in a family matter like giving birth, my wife would be cared for by the rukhag. They said that there would be people sent to help to her. So I had to go there.

It happened later that my wife got the disease of smallpox before the child was born, so the child also got that disease and was about to die. Then the baby died. Before I left, I had told the leaders that they should not look down on my wife and they should send a person to take care of her because her health was not good. Anyway, the baby was not able to survive. There had been such a case with the child born before the first one.

I worked as a nomad for nine years after that. My wife still tells me that she raised the child [alone], but I was always telling her that both of us had no freedom, so there is nothing to make a big deal about that now.

**Q:** How did the campaign against the "four olds" go in your village?

**A:** There was persecution against all who had done any trading or business in one way or another. All the people who traded were labeled as "capitalists," although it was a necessity for all people to trade to subsist. Most of the middle class farmers and the poor people just went through the motions of making confessions saying that they did this and that, and some of the bigger households had to pay a fine that was a percentage of what they were supposed to have earned from trade and business.

**Q:** What happened at the time when statues at homes and other places were destroyed and old customs were prohibited?

**A:** That was during the Cultural Revolution. It depended on the people who were doing the work. There was only one policy, but it depended on the subordinate people who were implementing the policy. In the place called Chölung [Tib. chos lung], which was a part of Dūjung Chu, all the jewelry and precious stones, like turquoise and coral, were destroyed by crushing them. But over here in our area, turquoise and coral were neither crushed nor confiscated. Because of that, many people in our locality can be seen wearing that jewelry on special occasions like the Chögor Festival.

During that time, when people heard that in other places they were crushing jewelry, many from our village and neighboring villages sold them very cheaply to nomads who came to buy the jewelry. They also asked us to sell the jewelry when we were going to graze animals. Those nomads mostly lived in Lhoka. Once there was a fair held in July in a place called Tingkye. At the fair, there were foreigners coming from across the border [Nepal] to do business. They were staying in tents on the other side of the bridge while sellers from our side tented near our side of the [border]bridge. Some of the jewelry was sold at this fair. We also had some jewelry that was sold in that way.

That movement wasn't as ferocious in our xiang as it was in other places. It was very loosely implemented in our place. Over here, there were only a few households with the class designation of gertshab. As there weren't many such households, one household in our village which had only one dzo and one horse was classified as a ngatsab.

In the upper part of the village, there was a person called Treshong [Tib. bkras gshongs] (who was classified as gertshab). It was said that his household had only one good quality chupa to be confiscated. In many other villages, there were many very rich households who were classified as gertshab. It seemed to have more to do with the people who carried out such policies than the policy itself.

**Q:** Were the Red Guards in your village from outside or did they come from the village itself?

**A:** The Red Guards were those young villagers in our village who were educated to become Red Guards. Normally as Red Guards, they had to hold meetings every night at which time they would present their opinions. Nobody could judge whether these were reasonable or not. At the time, it was more important to have something to say whether or not it was right or wrong.

Later, it was quite good when the Work Team and Military Commission [Tib. dmag don] arrived to preside over the nightly meetings. The Military Commission listened to all the opinions and thoroughly investigated the cases that were presented by the young Red Guards before acting on them. So this avoided making many people who were accused by Red Guards as trerim suffer. The Red Guards, being inexperienced and young, would always welcome those who were eloquent and spoke a lot. Then there would be people who would talk about things that happened years before, though they themselves didn't have any knowledge and experience of it.

**Q:** Was the Military Committee Chinese or Tibetan?

**A:** All of them were Chinese. The interpreters were young Tibetan women. The soldiers were stationed in each and every village. There were three military officers [Tib. dmag dpon] in the fourth rukhag. The one who stayed in the third rukhag, in Godö [Tib.?] village, was the top leader.

It was during the Cultural Revolution when they came in the villages. Many of the middle class farmers were said by the Red Guards to be ngatsab during a re-classification of class status. The households called Mano, Chukor and me were also classified as ngatsab. I felt very worried at this time as we could suffer a lot, but there wasn't anything to confiscate except the property

allocated during the democratic reforms. After hearing all the opinions from the Red Guards, the Military Committee, through an interpreter, called me at night when there wasn't another meeting and inquired about my origin as a gertshab. They were staying in a villager's house at the time.

**Q:** What were you asked?

**A:** I was asked, "Do you consider yourself a gertshab, because there are opinions expressed by the masses against you." I answered, "It depends on you higher authorities. I can't say that we are or are not gertshab. As for my wife, it's true that she was categorized as gertshab because according to the policy, she was one year too old to be a phutru. Despite that fact, she herself didn't exploit and oppress people, and except for some financial exploitations, there haven't been any cases of political exploitation since her father's time." And I confessed that I didn't have a clean personal history as everybody knew. But I declared, "My mother and the whole family were trenyog and are classified as part of the poor class." What I said was noted down and the interrogation stopped there. Then I wasn't told that I might not be categorized as gertshab, but they told me, "There are some among the masses who make rumors and say whatever they want to say, so one should listen to both bad and good comments. Then we can make a final decision." That (attitude) made me feel more at ease.

The process of listening to comments lasted about a month, and accusations against me were mounting day by day. Finally, one day it was said that the final decisions for all hearings would be made at a huge meeting held in the third rukhag where the leaders stayed. So with others I went there. Many people with us were saying, "It all depends on this day. Based on this we will either have a happy day or not. What kind of stars will appear today? We don't know whether a black star will appear or a white star." When we were there at the meeting, I felt unhappy. First they explained how the hearings and the meetings were done. The majority of young people believed that we would be categorized into the gertshab status. But there were older people who would approach us and tell us, "Don't worry. You will not be categorized as gertshab. The Party's policy is just. If they make the serfs from the old society into the class of gertshab, then you would have to suffer both in the old and the new society."

That day, the final decision of the meeting made two of the households in the xiang gertshab. They were Trakok [Tib. khra khog], which had been a very rich family during the old society, and Treshol [Tib. bkras zhol], which might have been categorized as gertshab due to ancestral history because the household wasn't rich at all in later times. In the end then, I felt very happy. Just after the meetings, many households invited each other for drinks as everybody was very happy (at the decision).

Before that, I was thinking that they would seal [confiscate] my house, though I didn't have much to be sealed [confiscated]. At the time, when we were categorized as trerim, they were saying that we were black crows which could not become white. I was worried that with a categorization of such a status it would be a black mark for life. And I even worried that my kids would be pitiable, as they would have the shadow of their parent's black mark. Then, just after the meeting, several men were called upon to work for irrigation somewhere. I was asked whether I would like to go or not and I replied "yes" because I felt now it would be no problem to work as I could associate with the common masses unlike before.

Later, after the gentsang was launched, conditions became much better and there was no talk of class categories and we had our own privatized land. When gentsang was launched, our rukhag's animal farm had eighty female yaks. All those female yaks were distributed among the people, and this was a good result from my previous [herder] effort. So all the people were praising me and everybody proposed that I continue to look after the cattle although gentsang had been launched.

They proposed that I take up the job of taking charge of all the cattle while my land would be cultivated by others on my behalf. But I didn't accept that, saying that now is the time to be working for oneself and to be happy as others like to be happy. With this I stubbornly declined to accept. The leaders were trying to make me take the job by praising me. The leaders were saying, "You had such success all those years on the state farm. So as suggested by the masses, it will be good for you to take up the job." Luckily, the following year there was a heavy drought where many cattle died because of arid weather, which led to there being no grass in the mountains and hills for the cattle. If I had accepted at that time, I would have been in a lot of trouble.

Due to the gentsang system, my kids who were born after this time were in more favorable conditions. They had much heavier physical builds than the previous children did. For instance, when they were born their mother could rest and feed them better. Now one of them, the son, is in the third year of middle school. I didn't have much hope for the elder children. Before that we didn't have wood to cut because I couldn't stay home often and plant the trees planted for the needs of the household, according to the plan of the government, had dried up as nobody could take care of them. But presently it is different. We have sufficient wood to be cut and there is extra wood that can be used for pillars, etc. for the construction of a house. Now I think I am really happy.

**Q:** Had you been subject to struggle sessions?

**A:** Not me.

**Q:** What about your wife?

**A:** Yes, she was. But nobody beat her up except for the militia leader who beat her up a little bit during a nightly meeting. That was for some kind of mistakes made at that time and it was also like a wrongful accusation. My wife mostly went through "reform through labor" tasks which were very arduous, and her daytime was consumed turning over the soil for them, so she didn't have any time to look after her children. She wasn't paid work points for the work during that time. She had to work at construction and other jobs, and our kids had to always be confined in our house. We had to leave meals in the house. The kids would eat in the house and go to the bathroom in the house at the same time. I also was not home during this time.

**Q:** In what manner was the Sogang Monastery and others destroyed?

**A:** In the case of Sogang Monastery, the militia and Red Guards destroyed it. It was in 1960, during the Cultural Revolution. It was

said these people attacked the Mani Lhakang [Tib. ma ni lha khang], which was a very big one. I wasn't in the village during that period, as I had to travel outside of the village to work. But later it was said that the people who did the destruction were all leaders, so nothing was clearly known. The one who headed all the destruction was Chime [Tib. 'chi med], the Director of the Revolutionary Committee [Tib. gsar brje u yon lhan khang] and also the Party Secretary [Ch. shu ji] in the xiang. The other person was Nyerkhang Thöndrub [Tib. gnyer khang don grub]. Both of them were young, but they have already passed away.

At that time, Nyerkhang Thöndrub was not really that bad. When we, the enemies, would ask him for leave, he would look at the situation and grant the leave. But there was another blacksmith who was worse. One of the interpreters of the Work Team stayed in his house. He hid a lot of things that belonged to the Sogang Monastery. He obtained a lot of things made of silver, etc. for himself as he was skillful in blacksmith work. He enjoyed life very much.

**Q:** So are there any Red Guards who have been through all those times still alive?

**A:** Yes there are. All must be old by now.

... When they inspected the fields, they didn't have time to measure the grain after the threshing was done, so they did not measure it. Some people were doing the threshing, and some were collecting the grain. If they called the tsugdrang to measure the grain, he himself had to work. Later, I was a tsugdrang. It was very difficult to take part in other activities since I had to do my own job. Everybody had to be occupied with one's own work all the time.

**Q:** What jobs did you have to perform as a tsugdrang?

**A:** I had to take responsibility for selecting the labor force and the manpower evenly. The middle farmers in the group would call upon me to send people for their work. So I had to make sure that the distribution of manpower was even.

**Q:** Would you be paid for that or not?

**A:** No, I wasn't.

**Q:** What was the yield like during the rukhag system?

**A:** During the rukhag period [the collective era], though there was strict pressure from government, the yields dropped very apparently. If the rukhag system lasted longer than it had, many people would have hardly been able to survive.

**Q:** Why was that?

**A:** It was because people were not putting their full mental and physical effort into work and were just whiling the time away. Actually, there wasn't any leisure time and we had to work every day. There would be endless work to be done such as plowing and other jobs, but people were not mentally motivated. In the case of those who would go after the plowing animals, they didn't keep up the farming equipment well, whereas those who herded cattle and planted crops were similarly very unmotivated. So there wasn't anyone who took care of the common interest at all.

For instance, if the iron plowshare that was used became dull, they would use it continuously, even though they knew that the dull plowshare would not plow the field well. Despite this, the leaders would just verbally give instructions and direction all the time which didn't have any effect because they would not go out onto the fields (themselves).

**Q:** What would be the yield during those times?

**A:** It would be about six to seven khe from one khe of seed. Then later for one to two years, when the Donation Grain was collected, there wasn't any share left to be paid to everyone who earned work points. Without the work point grain [Tib. skar 'bru], the work performed for the year turned pointless. So all the people could only get their "food grain" share which was fixed as a ration of twelve to thirteen khe per person per year. At the beginning, it was twelve khe, and later it was thirteen khe.

But with this system of rations, some households in which every member was an adult had an advantage for in addition to having work points through labor, they would also receive the ration grain. But in households like mine, while there would be ration grain for six people, which would leave extra grain as the children didn't consume that much, in terms of receiving work points we would fall behind other households where every member was an adult. Hence, during a good harvest year, the households with every member being an adult would have much more grain income. So in such cases there would be many incidents of struggles [Tib. 'thab rtsod] among people.

**Q:** What is the yield per khe of seed annually now?

**A:** It's hard to say. Mostly people do rough estimations. People do not measure the grain exactly.

**Q:** What about the system of measuring a sample of the best, middle and the worse fields?

**A:** There is that system applied to certain households by the government. But it's hardly credible. That system is more for official statistics. There would be households that have to say that this much is the yield, though in reality there isn't that much. When there is a certain amount that the xian ordered the xiang level to achieve [a certain target yield], then the xiang would say the yield is according to the order from the xian, that is, it would present a certain figure to satisfy that amount of yield.

**Q:** So if it is a rough estimation, wouldn't it be very high?

**A:** Much higher [than actual].



**Q:** Is it higher than the old society's yield?

**A:** Of course. It is a lot more than that.

**Q:** Is it fifteen khe from one khe of seed or ten khe?

**A:** Nowadays, people are talking about an amount of 10,000 jin.

**Q:** What would be the amount in term of jin?

**A:** There are always figures above 10,000.

**Q:** What about the amount in terms of mu?

**A:** I don't know much about the systematization of mu. It's less than a khe in the old times.